

*Frames of Mind*

**An Honors Thesis (Art 480)**

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## Abstract

The summation of my four years in the School of Art at Ball State amounted to my closing senior project in the spring of 2016. A photographic print series was created that expressed creative interpretations of a variety of emotions, personal and pertinent to experiences and myself. Each photo was rooted in a challenge I have had to face, a theme particular to myself, or some aspect learned introspectively over the past few years as I have matured into a young adult. I featured eight photographic prints, which were framed and hung on the Atrium gallery wall for the senior exhibition in May of 2016.

My tendency to creatively work through the way I process things and respond to events in life led to the want to make this project. My mentality is what drives my creativity. But it can also pose itself as a burden at times. However, positive, negative, and equivocal states of mind were portrayed throughout the photo series. And these explored elements were photographed so that it was not overtly evident of the artist's stance on one topic or another, leaving a curious ambiguity upon which the viewer could ponder. An audience was able to not only search for the artist's intent but also find elements they could relate to themselves.

I have always internalized the majority of my thoughts and emotions, creating a racing stream of consciousness in the landscape my mind. This stream of consciousness is only quelled by my expression through art. And looking back on the most recent few years of time, I have learned a great amount via collegiate studies and also through the superabundance of events in life. This project will show the integration of my learned skills by illustrating my experiences through photographic means.

## Acknowledgements

Following the completion of this senior project, I would like to thank my photography professor and project advisor, Mark Sawrie. With him challenging me to reach outside of boundaries in my art, I finish my photographic collegiate career remembering to, "be ambitious and be prolific."

Encouraging me to work hard no matter the challenges, roadblocks, or doubts along the way, I would like to thank my painting professor David Hannon. His sentiments of belief in my ability during my thesis semester helped to further motivate me.

Pursuing my love of art would not have been able without my parents' support since I was young. I would like to thank them for never stifling my artistic expression, as it became my prime passion in life. Their support throughout the evolution of their artistic daughter has allowed my hard work, put in throughout the past four years especially, to shape me into a determined artist.

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## **BFA Senior Thesis Essay**

### *Artist Statement*

The racing stream of consciousness that channels to create the valleys of my mind is only quelled by creative expression. A plethora of memories and artistic concepts of mine are often depicted through art. Though, having internalized many of these thoughts and emotions has recently led me to reflect on the various ideas that occur to me. After taking the time to carefully look back over the past several years, I have discovered many changes, maturities, and insightful epiphanies within my life and myself. Through this photographic project, I explored several individual frames of mind that each focus on an introspective realization.

My photographic series shows a personal point of view on broader subjects. Some of the subjects have been ones I have lived with and only just reflected on within the creation of this series. Also included are subjects that had to be overcome or through which I have matured. Such matters that the photos address include reflecting on childhood, accepting the change that surrounds you, living life with a religious influence in life, or the mentality that comes with growing independence.

My tendency to work creatively through processing thoughts and responding to events in life led to the creation of this series. The way in which I think and perceive things, my mentality, is what drives my creativity. Though, an intriguing ambiguity within each photo allows others to make their own interpretations and personal conclusions. Vivid colors, wide-angle landscapes, and allusions to the surreal were integrated in the making of each photo. Each photo either sets myself in the imaginative scene or has a clue as to the presence of a human having been there. The series presents curious still captures of the goings on within my mind. It started as an exploration of how I mentally work through and respond to events in my life. But what it has evolved into is more of an introspection of myself from the past into the present.

### *Influences*

The core of this photography project was inspired by events within my life. A concept based on societal issues or worldly occurrences could have been viable topics for the thesis. But ultimately I felt more passionate at this point in time to express something on a more personal level. Through my point of view, I wanted to explore realizations and reflections that have been tumbling around in my mind for a while. Much of my photography is made due mental and emotional influences, and this project exhibits that. Because photography, in particular, started as a therapeutic outlet for myself many years ago, it has transformed into my standard bridge of expression between my mentality and my creative output.

Through my senior project, much introspection was done, even before the final topic was settled upon. Not only taking note of changes to my persona over the last few years, but also influential changes in the world around me, I began to reflect and record. Writing helped to organize and channel this look that was both back in time and simultaneously on myself. Because I have experienced a variety of emotional states, adverse life events, and challenges in my teenage and young adult years, representing the



person I have thus become due to my past interested me. For a very long time it was hard to keep myself looking forward. Now I have reached a mental state and point in life where I can indeed, and with hope, look onward. The realization also occurred to me that I should stop for a moment to reflect on where I came from and who I am at this current time. Though only a select number of emotions and concepts are explored in this particular photographic series, they are a handful of many important elements that have shaped the adult I am today.

My initial source of inspiration for this idea to be the foundation of the thesis began at the beginning of the previous semester. During said time, other photography majors and myself had a class that was a preparatory and experimental course. This was a precursor to having to establish and plan our thesis in the semester that was to follow. During the precursor class, I worked on topics personal to myself. I wanted to work with my mental goings-on and depict them through artistic photography with well-executed craftsmanship.

No artists in particular had a defining significant impact on this project. But a few have helped inspire my photography style or aesthetic in loose terms. One photographer I greatly admire is Steve McCurry, who is a photojournalist-type photographer. He's worked for National Geographic and travels the world, capturing gorgeous landscapes and unique cultures through photography. Not only do I admire such a career, but also I enjoy the artist's use of color and contrast in his photographic composition. He brings life to the image with how he captures vivid hues and dramatic, often natural, lighting. And because my lens of choice is more often than not that of the wide-angle nature, it is great to see McCurry's use of the same technique in some of his photography.

Another photographer, whom I recently came across, is Bruce Charlesworth. He was big in the latter half of the twentieth century via photography and film. His photography is unique because it consists of sets he built and set up. Certain scenes, both ordinary and extraordinary, were created to provide setting for his concepts. He also worked with surreal elements through his photos, which is all the more admirable when electronically altering photos was not yet around as it is in modern times. Using distinct settings, captivating light and color choices, and symbolism, Charlesworth constructed narratives in his photos. He is known for his art of fabricating a scene and telling a story within it, however ambiguous the tale may seem.

A third artist, incredibly well known, is the filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock. I always pay attention to how a film is shot when I see a movie. And both modern and classic films are greatly enjoyable. One is able to see the array of styles among the different time periods and directors through such a variety. And Hitchcock is one of the earliest interests in cinematography that I have been inspired by. He is known for structuring shots to promote fear, suspense, and anxiety in the viewer. His work also is well noted for its use of voyeurism; that is, the technique of framing a shot in film or photography where the viewer assumes the role of looking in on a scene that is otherwise unaware of the viewer's presence. His films contain elements such as drama, humor, and uncertainty. And this is appealing to incorporate within photography, which is similar to film sans the factors of time or sound. Both art forms have their benefit, and while I prefer to create with still cameras I have always been fascinated in studying the art of film and cinematography alongside it.



Music is an element that has always played some part in my art. Since I was young, I noticed that music could have a real affect on me emotionally. Whether it is listening to an orchestral performance, zoning out to the tune of a rap song, or indulging in unique foreign musicians, this art form has always held my interest. It is not unlikely then that it should show up as some significance pertinent to my visual arts. In fact the theme of my cumulative works from my senior year in my high school IB Art program was based on the influence music had on myself.

In this senior college project, music does not take a front seat within the photos. Rather it is a part of my process. Listening to music, both lyrical and instrumental, is something that often sparks my creativity. Indulging in music aids my mind in steadying the river of racing thoughts in order to extricate clear ideas. With these patches of comprehensible notions, I find myself able to come up with artistic ways to represent each idea. Also, music has the power to tune one's emotions to a particular channel, so as to hone in on one more acutely. This influence has helped to channel particular emotions that I wish to establish within my photography, as well.

Though I do not have any specific literary influences correlating with my senior project, the importance, allure, and format of an intriguing story are things I like to incorporate in my photos. Within short stories and novels, the plot starts with a beginning, rises to a climax, and then has some sort of resolution. Through a single photo, or even a small photographic series, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to fully tell a complete story. Writings allow the ease of explanation through words. But something I have integrated into my work, the more I grow with my photography, is the element of storytelling. Through the photos I strive to exhibit part of a story, an insight into a plot, or an emotion that conjures up a tale the viewer can create themselves. The senior series I created is not a chronological representation of one solitary idea, but it creates an insight into and emotional lure towards my overarching concept.

Additionally as it relates to writing and literature, physically writing out my thoughts, ideas, and processes throughout my entire senior year has become a needed stepping stone. In the past, I was not in the habit of writing out every idea or thought in relation to art that occurred. But as whims are easily forgotten and the mind can only keep so much at its forefront, I was encouraged to write more even if it was incoherent. I do enjoy writing creatively as far as literature goes, but as far as photography went I did not have the same thought. Nevertheless, as soon as I began filling up a large sketchbook with doodles, quotes, thoughts, and ponderings, my artistic process became more refined. Also, on occasion, my photography professor would request short writings from the photography majors, helping to clarify the meaning within our art and artistic opinion. Adapting this new element into my artistic process more heavily recently has positively influenced my senior project.

In a world filled with many stimuli, it is apparent that many things have influenced my senior thesis project. Artists, music, artistic endeavors, critiques, interests, and more have all played some part in this series. Organizing the numerous different elements, I have decided upon a concept to focus on in my thesis; that is, to photographically explore changes and realizations I have noticed in myself from altering progressions of time. This



personal approach in reflection through the perspective of a modern young adult will transform into a series of prints, concluding my senior photographic semester.

### *Process*

The process to creating art involves a number of steps, unique to each artist. The way one may choose to create is never quite the same as another person. And that is one of the greatest things about using one's talents and acquired skills to produce something out of a mere idea. The process of how ideas get from my mind to reality arises in a variety of ways. But with creating my senior photographic series, several elements and steps were included in order to produce the prints from concept to finished product.

There are many stimuli surrounding individuals these days and even more when one goes searching for it. Many things inspire me constantly, and the first step to my art-making process was to get inspired. The flood of ideas happens so often that, in the past, the inspirations I had once conjured up became forgotten. But throughout college I have learned to record both full fledged and fragmented ideas so that my previous notions can be looked back upon in order to create art. This is often done by either writing things down in a sketchbook, on a cell phone, or saving files on a laptop. With more stimuli in the modern age comes more ways to record ideas, but it also creates quite a backlog of inspirations to choose from.

Some specific inspirations came about from time to time. The first included dreams or daydreams of mine, which spontaneously sparked imaginative concepts that could be further dove into. Other times political issues, current events, or controversial art would be brought to my attention. And in response to one thing or another, I would feel strongly enough to represent some point of view of mine via photographs. And lastly, other art forms such as cinematic films or works in museums inspired my own creative process and personal depiction of the world.

After getting inspired and somehow recording my revelations and artistic notions, the following step was to further develop the more promising ideas or ones able to be sought out. Some ideas were short bursts of creativity that actually did not have more to them than the initial idea recorded; therefore, they would be impractical or impossible to develop into something on a more predominant scale. Other ideas were too grand for my time, budget, or resources at the point in time and were catalogued for review at a later, future date. But once I narrowed down the more viable options, in the current case being the ones that related to my senior thesis concept, they were then elaborated on. The ideas were stretched and poked, through written form at first, so their importance to the main concept could be evaluated. My thoughts were written out, research on the subjects was recorded, and even early ideas or simple doodles were sketched to keep my brain on topic. Once the words in my art journal or sketch book sufficiently explained the idea at hand, drawings of props, different camera and lighting setups, location ideas, makeup contours, and the like were created. Also, ideas for possible compositions of photos were sketched out to keep in mind when actually shooting. Though the sketches were often rough ideas or things to simply try, they worked in tandem with the spontaneous ideas that arose during the actual shoots.



Finally, after all the planning, acquiring the necessary materials for any given shoot, and preparing the camera and equipment, it was time to go photograph. Unless I am doing travel, nature, or photojournalistic photography, I have some sort of outside influence in my photos. This means that there has been some alteration to the environment, props have been used, or people are in the scene. Since there is some amount of setup in these types of photographs, the notion to try as many possibilities as applicable is always at hand. During each shoot the camera was moved into a variety of positions, different lighting ideas were tested, altering angles were used, and a variety of camera settings were tried. Also when people were involved, which they often are in my more creative photography, a number of diverse types of photographs were created with them. Such examples include traditional bust portraits, full body shots, macro close-ups, traditional and unconventional angles, and motion versus still captures. It was also important, whether working with models or myself, to capture both planned and candid shots. That is an element less taxing to accommodate for when shooting digital photography versus shooting film photography, one of the reasons digital is personally preferred.

Aside from taking the actual photographs, the post-processing portion of digital photography is something I am keen on, as well. One must either enjoy this part or at least take heed to it, for it is one of the main reasons to shoot digitally. I transition back and forth between slightly altering and fully changing photographs, for it is dependent on the concept at hand. My first choice is to do things as practically as possible however, wanting to avoid the clearly fake or heavily photo-shopped aesthetic. Once the digital files from my many photo-shoots were uploaded onto the computer, the first step was to delete all the simply unusable ones. This included lighting test shots, completely ill shot photos, badly cropped images, or out of focus captures. Though, ones that may be viable at some point in time, even if their apparent capture was not what was originally intended, were kept around in case of future need or use. Secondly, the batch was again reviewed, and that time the ones that should be considered for further edits were digitally marked and put into their own folder. A third look-through commenced, and ones that were prioritized to be edited were digitally marked in a different way than previously. Thus, those chosen files were edited, often in a medley of ways, to project the concept that was intended or sometimes, imagined after the fact, invented. When these shots were picked, for hundreds of photos per idea were shot and only so many can be edited successfully, I looked for compositional and aesthetic appeal. The accomplishment of conveying a concept was important when picking and creating the photograph, as well. And, as it is important to me personally with art, clarity and craftsmanship were kept in mind throughout the entire process.

For my thesis the photographs were printed. Though, many times the photos I create never make it to paper; instead, they might be stored or displayed digitally. But for the senior capstone project, smaller prints of the most successful photos were printed. The professor and peers would critique them on academic critique days. Then the most well received photos, or ones that received critiques and were able to be edited successfully after class, would be created into the larger, final prints. Lastly, the large poster-like prints of mine were framed accordingly.



An important life skill I gained early through my academic career and have refined ever since is that of organization. Having the skill to organize a plethora of work or academic events, to-do requirements, and plans is an essential responsibility to the success of what I do both as a student and as an artist. To coordinate all of the details that go along with creating successful digital photos requires one to stay alert in their strategy of creating fine art. As far as the photography senior thesis, I have also had to plan elements aside from the photographic prints. In addition: a self-promotional card was created; a written thesis essay for the School of Art and one for the Honors College was produced; promotion for the exhibition was established; and a record of my personal exhibition in the gallery was formed. Having these elements balanced and organized was a very important part of my process with this entire project.

Many factors go into creating a work or series of fine art. Everything from the art's conception, to its planning, to the execution is important. One part does not really override the weight of another, especially when creating more planned and academic pieces of art. That is, they are not simply trials do so incompletely or whims to attempt with lackluster. The variety of steps done when creating digital photos is something that I have worked on and honed in over the past eight years of working in this medium. The culmination of the learned process is executed with the creation of my senior thesis.

### *Analysis of Works*

The first concept I shot had to do with religion, and that is the first print I decided on after many shoots, edits, and a class critique. I chose to include this piece in my ultimate selections because it encompassed the concept relating to my growth, challenges, and daily choice to be Catholic. I am glad to be Catholic, but that does not mean things have been easy with this choice that has and will affect me a lot in life.

The first piece showed myself outside of the church I attend when at college. In the photo the crucifix was partially viewable through a narrow window. The vertical scene took place at night, so the glow from the interior shone bright through the same window. This gave a real impact visually and, if the viewer would want to read deeper into the photo, metaphorically.

I wanted the photo to portray ambiguity so that the viewer could not quite tell what the artist's or character in the photo's opinion was on the apparent religious topic. This was done to ensure that the viewer would not suddenly be turned off or biased as they viewed the piece, perhaps relating it suddenly to their own pro- or anti-religious feelings. A second reason the ambiguity was implemented was to make the viewer read further into the photo to see what the piece was trying to say or make the audience ponder upon.

Not solely in regard to religious requirements or canon, but also in regard to my personal character, aspects of this religion have helped me make many decisions in life. But whether the struggle was myself versus my mind, myself versus the religion, or myself versus society and other people, I have indeed had issues concerning this concept. But much change and growth occurred during my young adult life. Reflecting back on significant topics in my personal timeline, this subject was included in my introspective senior project.



The next three photos that made it into the final selection all relate to a similar subject. But they do so in three differentiating ways. The general subject relates to reflecting on my past via childhood or adolescence. Also reflected is the fact that I have grown since those younger years, through the passage of time, both physically and mentally.

The first photo was one of a child-sized slide that had been built into the side of a small hill. The structure had caution tape posted all around it, too. At first, when the shot was displayed to my class for our second peer critique of the semester, an unaltered photo was shown. The presented picture was a slightly edited version of a shot at the location, but it included a frame on the slide. The frame contained a photo of myself as a one year old and was placed on the edge of the slide's exit. This was the original plan that would later be changed. At first I was pleased with the composition and thought it brought up feelings of childhood or nostalgia. But it also provoked interest with the caution tape all around the unusually interesting setting.

However, a particular notion was noticed as I looked at the photo more and saw it had a memorial atmosphere, particularly in regard to a deceased child. This was not the intended goal for the photo's message. During a classroom critique, this same notion was brought up, but the other critiques in regard to the shot were positive. Subsequently, the photo's message was to be remedied while still using the interesting site. Since access to the site again was not possible at the time, I wanted to try digitally altering the scene before it was altogether scrapped. The original concept to bring back was that of pondering childhood, having caution looking back at that time or caution in noticing one is no longer in that more carefree time. In order to remedy this, I photo-shopped a child's blanket on the location where the frame had been. A childhood object instead of the framed photo of a toddler made the object at hand less reminiscent of a memorial and more geared towards a forgotten item at this scene. This better fit the concept and mood at which was being aimed.

The next photo, in regard to the comparable subject of childhood, was one of a child-sized yellow house. In the final photo I was positioned between the camera and the small, walled room with my back to the camera. Within the crop of the photo was from my calves to my shoulders, which was all in focus. In slightly less focus, but not blurred like the rest of the composition, was a framed photo of myself as a baby. The photo frame was positioned on a picket-fence-type ledge that made up one of the house's opened walls. The picture turned out to be more cinematic in its approach and mood due to its framing. While cinematography is of great interest and inspiration to me, it was not overtly engaged on purpose in the shot. Also, the aspect ratio of the series is 4:5, far from the cinematic 16:9 or 2.39:1 ratios. But this vantage point was successful in this setting for the visual impact it provided.

The compositional focus was on both the human subject and the picture frame. The human's expression was only visible through partial body language but one could tell the subject is apprehensive, surprised, hesitant, or at least questioning something when faced with the framed photo of the baby. The surrounding scene was colorful yet muted with yellows, whites, and dark hues among the shadows. But with the background being both blurred and substantially lighter than the subjects, the setting did not cause distraction. The



potential distraction of a busy or unrelated background had been a problem I was made aware of as I progressed in my digital photography career. Along with this the opposite was an issue I had dealt with prior to this project. During the previous semester, I had experimented with shooting in a controlled lighting studio environment. But with that the focus had been more on the subject and not on the background. This was a missed opportunity to add to a photo's narrative. That being said the photo of the yellow house was a solid blend of concept, subject significance, and a non-distracting setting, which added to the concept itself. In the end the photo was chosen to hang in a smaller frame, near my comment book and artist statement in the gallery, to act as an introduction into the series.

The third photo in this sub-concept also features the same yellow children's playhouse. But it was taken from a different point of view. Thus it featured the interior of the space, facing towards the rectangular hole that signified the entryway. Standing slightly outside of the entrance and facing the camera was myself. But because I am tall and the structure was miniature, the visibility of myself was from the mouth down, obscuring to an unknowing viewer my exact identity. Only a questionable, curious expression was partially visible through my body language and agape mouth. Along with that, natural yet dramatic lighting added more ominous atmosphere to the shot. In the composition, a nod to childhood occurred less blatantly, because it was the setting that acted as a second subject, aside from the primary one of the human presence. But the childlike setting paired with my adult self and the foreboding mood created an intriguing juxtaposition. Verticality plays into the photo's composition due to the tall, narrow windows adjacent to a similar doorframe. The main subject nearly entirely framed by the doorway added another latitudinal element. All of the plumb elements paired within a horizontal crop added visual interest to the piece. As did the other photo featuring the yellow house, this photo displays a muted color palette, further juxtaposing a place that is otherwise reserved for frolicking children.

The next picture in the series took a stand in relation to growing up into an adult and the memories lost or forgotten along the way. For the first time since I was a child, I accidentally came across my old childhood park a few months before my thesis was completed. And at that first instant, as I drove by and it was out of sight in seconds, a flood of forgotten memories broke into my mind. It was unknown that, for so long, I had lived near this place that had been set on a different planet within my memory banks. What I can recall from early adolescence is scarce, let alone from childhood. Much of this is probably due to an exorbitant amount of stress gone through during my younger years. So the fact that memories had been housed all that time, just minutes before unbeknownst to my consciousness, was a surprise in that moment.

As I made my way back to the site at a later date, a wave of realization came over me as I took in the place more closely. The looping path in the park, resembling a rounded superellipses, was worn and suddenly smaller than my younger memory recalled. The playground itself was minuscule, with the grassy land beyond the metal structures unkempt. And bees that once frightened a child version of myself had abandoned their refuge at the covered picnic tables. The entire plot of land now, through my adult eyes, seemed like an otherwise unnoticed section of the suburban area. How was it that my



hidden memories and present view could differ so much? This was the spark that started my introspection and a real foundation to the project's overarching concept.

The chilly fall season that housed leafless trees and unwelcoming air seemed to mirror my newfound disheartened sense self-contemplation at this location that was no longer as magical. This sense was thus presented in the photo, even more so to one who knows the story behind the picture. To point out the reflection time passed and change occurred, from my childhood to the present day, I incorporated a juice box. The childlike object, its contents far outgrown by my adult taste buds, acted like a key for the viewer. It was a tool selected to signify a time in life that no longer sat well with me. I encouraged this mood, too, by the expression on my face and the body language. Having placed all the action dead center in the frame forced the viewer to also confront this subject I had recently found myself pondering. Covering the whereabouts of the path flowing behind me also hinted at an uncertainty about the future.

The next topic I explored had to do with my hometown. Though I was born in Chicago, I spent twenty of my twenty-two years growing up in the same town in Indiana. I have very much enjoyed the area but as I grew older, into my high school years in particular, I noticed just how much change was being forced upon the area. New houses and roads were sprouting up slowly, I began to notice—even new schools. But it was not until I left for college that I began to appreciate that which I did not see changing before my eyes, whilst I was away from the town. For, due to my absence, the sense of change was made all the greater when I returned from school time and again.

Not only was the shock more apparent when I came home, but so too were the construction projects more visible as time led onwards. Roads, which I previously could have predicted every bump felt when driving along them, were uprooted and shattered, like a crumpled strip of paper. In their place became things like confusing roundabout interchanges that seemed to never quite be finished, the paint lines literally changing weekly until the city planners and construction companies agreed on a working option. And these alterations kept occurring when I came back home to the point that the constant modification of the city became normalcy. I explored this via art briefly during my earlier college years through film photography and collage.

But the real kicker happened within the most recent year, hence the subject being an important component to my thesis. On the opposite side of the street from my house were other neighbors' houses, but behind their homes was a small set of woods. Trees created what seemed like one of the last natural buffers left in my area. As a child and teenager, I remembered how the beautiful trees housed sounds of owls and coyotes at night, much to the vexation of the neighborhood adults but to my young self's wonderment. It was when this little patch of woods, a patch of familiarity in my upbringing, was plucked that I took even more notice of my environment.

I snapped out of the daze I had been in when a road, redundantly adjacent to the newly improved highway, and a series of apartment buildings replaced the wooded area. The construction smoke cleared and once again I found myself looking not only back in time, but also inward unto myself. The time from before all the construction, change, and desolation of familiarity took hold. And I found myself pondering on why this all was resonating with importance to me in the first place. In my maturity into adulthood, I finally took a minute to place these memories on a timeline. The events not only marked physical



changes within my town but also marked stages of my own change. Broadly speaking as the familiarity of my environment began to alter out of my—what will metaphorically be called—control, in a similar fashion I also went through the turbulent times of adolescence and transitioned into a young adult.

The reality of time's progression and the realization of how many events could occur on a person's timeline during a span of time that Earth would not bat an eye at had hit me. To even discern such a deep notion from a typical and modern set of events was a surprise to my own self. But that is why I wanted to depict this realization and change in my senior thesis.

Wanting to catalogue this concept, I photographed many locations around my town. But the most captivating setting was depicted in my final chosen photo relating to the idea. In the photo, I was set up as a wanderer with a bag and walking stick in hand. What would end up being a better place to use for this concept than the last few remnants of the trees that used to make up the woods previously mentioned? The wanderer gazed out curiously, and longingly on a more personal note, to the trees. I was perched on the precipice of a newly constructed pathway. The area was not yet fully developed; instead, it had the establishment of a freshly created sidewalk that foretold of the complete urbanization soon to come. Near the new apartments, the little landing acted as a sign of man's presence in a place that used to be owned by nature. Even the small piece of misplaced trash from the construction job was purposefully placed in the photo to nod at my personal distaste for the large ecological footprint humans are creating. The dirt and mud surrounding the sidewalk acted like a sea foreshadowing the suburban sod and asphalt roads that were no doubt on their way. Through this photo I exhibited the fresh realization that I longed for the more natural, familiar, and nonindustrial past version of my town. This parallels my awareness, through self-observation, that I too have gone through many alterations and changes in the same span of time.

Another component to my photographic series had to do with a change within myself. As time has taken me along its path, I have become aware that my persona is keen to listening and observation. Also, throughout the different groups of friends faded in and out of over time, I have been deemed the mature one or the parental figure. Although outgoing and very friendly when others give me the opportunity to present it, I am an introvert in that I both enjoy and need time alone, too.

Being at college separated the water from the oil, however. That is I never found the glory in partying away money spent for education, the benefits in binge drinking, an appeal in immaturity, nor the point of indulging in superficial matters. Because of this I have had a lot of alone time at college and have found it hard to relate to a great quantity of people, enough to form a true friendship with them. The solitariness can become stifling when it is sustained, especially as I am now a senior, further differing from the younger crowd at college.

This trait within my personality is something I have struggled to compensate with or alter completely for many years. And though trying to make friends with personalities that clashed with my own had worked for a while, in the end those bonds were not meant to last with that type of foundation. So to symbolize this struggle of being someone mature for my age and liking some alone time but also struggling with isolation and depression, I



created a photo for the series. The internal reflection fits back into my overarching introspective concept for the thesis project.

In the shot two figures of myself were pictured in a forest. One was closest to the camera, in focus, and dispirited as she held a small nearby tree for standing support. The other figure in the distance was out of focus but looked up toward a hopeful sun shining down upon her through the forest. The first figure represented the struggle of being who I am in the environment I have been and currently am in. The latter represented my hope and positivity for something more than the negativity through which I am working. The forest represents both my enjoyment of time alone and my love of nature in general. Wearing an outfit that is both all encompassing and an allegorical contrast of black and white lends to the concept as well. The subtle surrealism with two clone figures adds interest to the simple yet heavily symbolic photo.

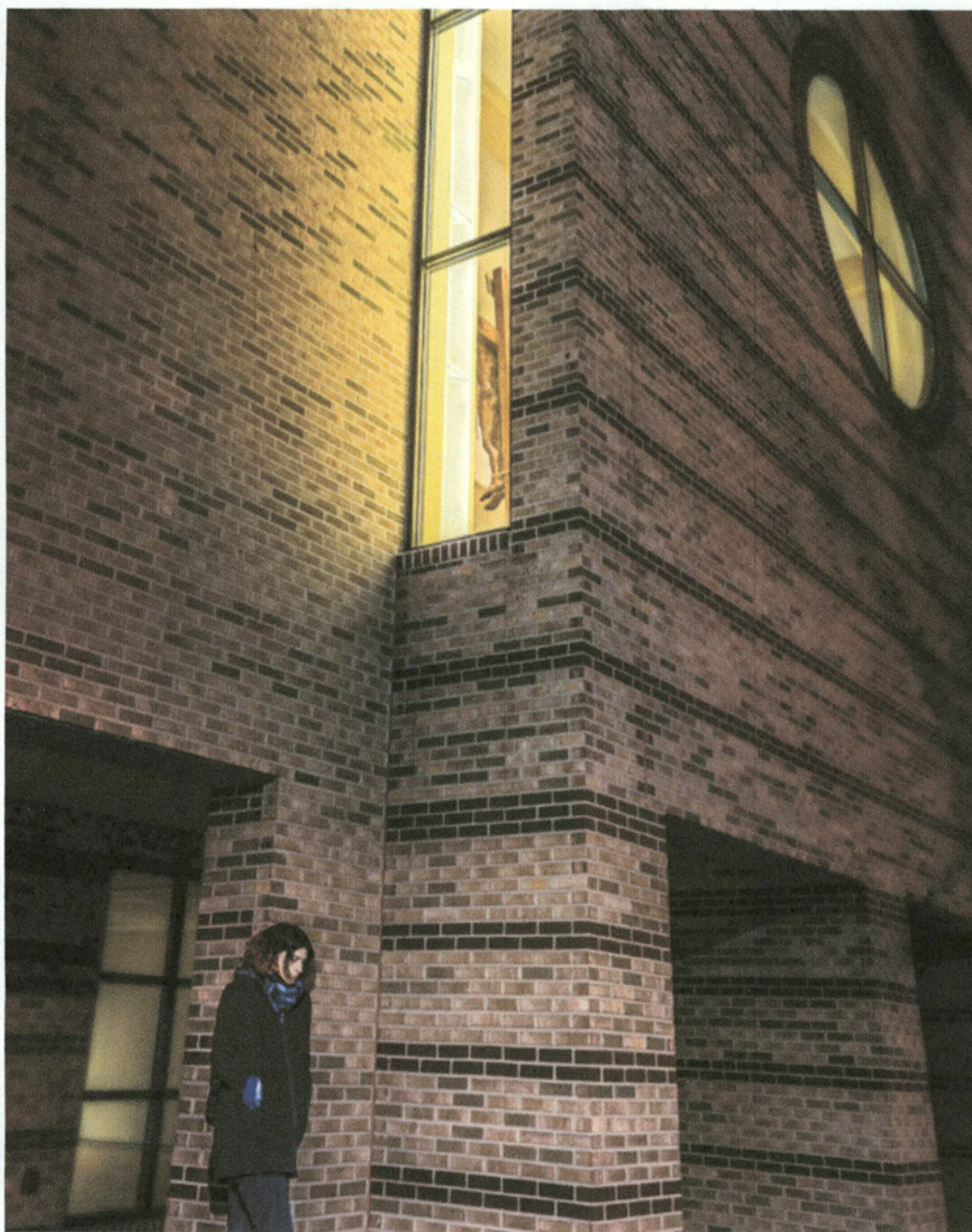
The final photo in the eight photo series was a fully surreal depiction. It showed an open cardboard box on a lush grassy yard. The area from my shoulders to my head was protruding from the box that was otherwise much too small to hold a person within it. The obviously mysterious physics involved with this illusion added a bewildering intrigue for the viewer. The figure in the box was calmly staring up at the sky, as well.

The origin for this photo's concept came about when I was pondering the idea of place. Essentially, out of my own choice or free will, I was placed in my hometown and brought up there by two other persons. And during my times at primary and secondary schools, I had always felt out of place for some reason or another. In elementary school I was the tomboy choosing to wear cargo pants as I constantly badgered boys at recess to allow me onto their football team. In middle school I was superfluously reminded by my peers how unnaturally tall I was for a girl, let alone one their age. And at my private Catholic high school, I was the alternative artistic student who wore gothic accessories with the school uniform and admired Edgar Allan Poe perceivably too much in English class. Throughout all of this, I never was what others would call a popular kid, though now being an adult it is easy to see how said concept is futile and banal. But I have always had a sense that I was different from the status quo as I grew.

Because of this I wanted to play around with the idea that I came from some foreign area, shipped to the environment in which I currently reside. Going to college makes one learn many things about themselves at an alarming rate, and it is because of this that the figure ironically has a calm expression. The figure has, at the point in time when the photo was taken, reflected on past times and accepted the things that made, and currently make, the figure different. In essence this piece is an acceptance of my introspective speculation and ponderings on my past selves

After much time has passed, many notes were recorded, numerous photos were taken, and several factors were juggled, eight conceptual photos were finalized to create my senior photographic fine art thesis. Each one depicted an important note of reflection within my mind, life, and environment. Colorful palettes, a handful of intriguing point of views, and many symbolic elements were used to create the scenes. Application of my unique artistic style was made to each photograph; thus, the photos were able to stand separately as single experiences yet also worked together in a cohesive introspective series.



































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